



## Banana Rose

*Natalie Goldberg*

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## **Banana Rose** Natalie Goldberg

The bestselling novel from the beloved author of *Writing Down the Bones*, *Wild Mind*, and *Long Quiet Highway* is now available in paperback for the first time. With a half-million copies in print of her three remarkable books of nonfiction, Natalie Goldberg has inspired a generation of writers with her insight, humor, and empathy. Subtly hilarious and achingly raw, her first novel *Banana Rose* has rewarded her devoted fans while attracting a whole new readership to her work.

*Banana Rose* is the story of Nell Schwartz, a Brooklyn-born Jewish girl who moves to the Taos of communes and sweet cedar smoke, transforms herself into Banana Rose (because she's "bananas"), falls in love with a horn player named Gauguin, and believes they can stop time if they just love hard enough. It's also about Nell and Anna, a strange-eyed writer as lonely as the Nebraska farm where she grew up, whose kisses taste like raspberries and who teaches Nell what it means to be an artist. But most of all, *Banana Rose* is about Nell's struggle with her own wild heart, with the demands of canvas and paint, with her family and faith, and with her irrepressible longing for home.

## **Banana Rose Details**

Date : Published March 1st 1997 by Bantam (first published 1995)

ISBN : 9780553375138

Author : Natalie Goldberg

Format : Paperback 384 pages

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## From Reader Review Banana Rose for online ebook

### Harley says

I have been wanting to read this book for years and I finally did. I fell in love with the creative works of Natalie Goldberg more than 25 years ago. I have read **Writing Down the Bones** 4 or 5 times. I was rereading **Wild Mind** for the third time when I started reading **Banana Rose**. I have read two of her memoirs and her book on painting.

In many of her books on writing, Goldberg talks about the importance of detail in writing. And she practices what she preaches in this her only novel. She builds the story through attention to detail. I know some people have been disappointed with this book. I was not. I think she did a great job of telling the story. I liked the character of Banana Rose.

Not much happens in the story. We move from one day in Banana Rose's life to the next. The book is framed by the death of a friend. Goldberg discusses the writing of **Banana Rose** in the book, **Wild Mind**. She admits that the main criticism of her editor is that the book has no plot. In the rewrite, she added a slight plot, but don't expect great movement.

If you choose to read this book, go slow and absorb the details. The enjoyment is in the details. And read **Wild Mind** along side it.

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### Cdrueallen says

I'd listened to Natalie Goldberg's audio CD on Zen and writing and enjoyed it, so when I saw **Banana Rose** in the used bookstore, I couldn't resist. Would her fiction live up to her writing instruction? It did. An enjoyable look at the wild hippy life of a New York Jewish girl. The writing is fresh and vital, transporting you to the world of **Banana Rose** and her lover/husband Gaugin. If I had a complaint, it would be that **Banana Rose** remains painfully naive and without a trace of the political theory that inflamed the 1960's. The result of too much Zen?

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### melydia says

Like, I suspect, most people who read this book, I picked it up out of a love for Goldberg's books on writing, most notably **Writing Down the Bones**. In those books she emphasizes freewriting and original detail far more than standard stuff like plot, character, and revision, and it is quite evident in this debut novel. Nell is a hippie living near Taos, New Mexico; this is the story of her journey to becoming an artist. The language is vibrant and the metaphors unforgettable, but the story and dialogue often fall flat. Nell is a total brat for about the first half of the book, which was long enough that I didn't really care much what happened to her by the end. That said, I cannot overemphasize the gorgeousness of the prose. Sure, the story is about Nell, but mostly it is a love letter to New Mexico. It made me long for the desert. Hopefully Goldberg's later novels have improved character and story without losing the fantastic imagery.

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### Lisa says

Truly abysmal; I was embarrassed for Goldberg. Notice she's never published another novel...one presumes I was not the only one who hated it.

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## Rowe says

Now that I've been to New Mexico, I can read this book. Twice I'd started, and while the prologue stayed with me, I felt too critical of it. A month after going out West, I see Taos, New Mexico with different eyes. I spent hours driving through the desert with my family. In the City of Rocks in southern New Mexico, I spent time hiking to the tops of boulders and looking to the horizon across the desert. BANANA ROSE is a beat novel all about the hippie commune in Taos and what it was like for Nell to leave it for love. Hippie literature differs from the mainstream in that it both wanders and is episodic, and Goldberg's novel is no exception to this style. What Goldberg offers, instead, is intimacy. I loved this book, and I'm sad, thinking about the trip I took last month; I wish I could do it all again. Maybe one day, I will.

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## Laura says

This is a great book. I read it in two days. The imagery and the feelings are so real.

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## Hope says

Like Anne Lamott, I like Natalie Goldberg's autobiographical works much better than her fiction.

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## Rebecca says

I just finished reading Banana Rose by Natalie Goldberg for one of my book clubs. I honestly cannot recommend this book. The book has a good premise (hippie girl tries to find herself and becomes a real artist in New Mexico) but the author does a terrible job fleshing out the characters. They are not believable and the dialogue rings false. The dialogue feels very contrived and artificial.

Almost every chapter (sometimes every paragraph) had a sentence that just made me say "Ugh!" For example, from page 187..."After my mouth had been kissed to the color of plums and the shape of Italian tomatoes and my body was a pregnant fruit, Anna stood up." The book is filled with visuals like that one that just feel yucky to me.

Another thing that annoyed me about the book was that the author had her name and the title of the book printed across the header of each page. Why?

I thought the story was decent but I just hated the writing.

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## Virginia Pulver says

The storyline, which seemed to be quite autobiographical, despite the disclaimer, is compelling. Frankly, I was put off (or perhaps disappointed) by the lackluster dialogue. Having lived in Santa Fe, Denver and in the upper Midwest (among about 15 other areas), I was drawn in by Goldberg's observations about them and the people who live there.

### **Carla Stafford says**

I enjoyed the description in this book-it seemed appropriate to me that a painter/hippie would describe her emotions using color descriptions and nature metaphors. I think I struggled with the straightforward simplistic nature of Banana Rose's character. This may be consistent with her hippie ideals-but her ability to easily accept monumental events in her life...or at least to describe heart wrenching experiences in a passive voice-was difficult for me to relate to on a personal level. Portions of Banana Rose dragged on for me-but not so much that I regret reading it.

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### **Ronald Wilcox says**

Although several reviewers have panned the writing style in this book, I found the voice of the protagonist, Banana Rose, interesting in a way that made me care about what would happen to her. She is a hippie, living in Taos, New Mexico, who meets Gauguin, a man who quickly becomes the love of her life. The book is filled with the ups and downs of her life over the next few years as well as the lives of several quirky friends. Very tangential in style in an enjoyable manner.

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### **Geoff Young says**

Two of my favorite nonfiction writers are Anne Lamott and Natalie Goldberg. Their voices are conversational, engaging, and unique. When reading their essays, I often feel like I'm listening to a familiar friend full of charm and insight. They inspire me.

Unfortunately their attempts at fiction do not have a similar effect. Goldberg's *Banana Rose* suffers from a first-person narrator that comes off as self-absorbed and shallow, often providing irrelevant details that manage to make both food and sex boring while also trivializing the death of a loved one (this isn't a spoiler, as the death is revealed in the prologue).

Do we really need to know the phone numbers of three different people? Do we really need descriptions of lovemaking so clinical that they risk pushing the reader toward abstinence? Do we really need to know the color and make of the car she drives to visit her friend in the hospital or which street she turns on to get there? Your friend is in the hospital, for crying out loud, show some emotion.

The story lacks energy and focus, the dialogue is largely expository and devoid of wit. Fungible cardboard characters flit in and out of the thin plot for no apparent reason. If you forget who someone is, don't worry; chances are it doesn't matter anyway.

Overall, this was a very frustrating read. I'm both proud of and angry with myself for finishing it.

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### **Ruby Hollyberry says**

Like another author who writes very very well when she writes about herself and about writing (Anne

Lamott), Natalie Goldberg sucks at fiction. I love Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within and Wild Mind: Living the Writer's Life with an unquenchable passion, just as I love Lamott's Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year, Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith, Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith, and Grace Eventually : Thoughts on Faith. I read all these nonfiction books over and over with love and memorize bits permanently. But I cannot read any of Anne Lamott's novels to save my life, and Banana Rose is as bad or worse. These two chicks seem to live very firmly in ordinary reality in such a way that they only sound convincing when they are in fact telling the literal truth.

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### **Emily says**

I really like writing down the bones, but Banana Rose just left me cold. The old expression, "those who can't do, teach" comes to mind...

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### **Alison Perry says**

This was the first Natalie Goldberg I ever read and I totally fell in love with it. The book follows Bananna Rose as she deals with love, friendship and life after the hippie-era in Taos, NM. It's pretty artsy and a lot dirty hippie. I love it.

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